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ABSTRACT

To be effective in dealing with minority constituencies, the community college administrator needs special personality traits and communication skills: he/she must be tough-minded, articulate, aware of different life-styles, and empathetic; he/she should be able to withstand criticism, confront problems directly, accept compromise, and tolerate profanity; he/she needs humor and foresight; and he/she should be a realist and a patient listener. These skills and traits are especially important in that minority students frequently approach administrators in frustration and anger and demand immediate solutions to their problems. Sensitivity training techniques and confrontation workshops--successfully used in business and industry--may help administrators develop the skills needed to handle these situations. An effective administrator must be aware of the types of unique problems that arise when dealing with minority students; these may be in areas of supervising ethnic studies programs, dealing with controversial speakers, gaining knowledge of ethnic life-styles, hiring administrators from minority backgrounds, and instituting programs to make the "open door" policy successful. Such programs may include pre-college orientation and recruitment; tutorials offered on a one-to-one, workshop, or self-instructional basis; and career and personal counseling. (AYC)

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ARE SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS REQUIRED IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS' RELATIONS WITH THE MINORITY CONSTITUENCIES?

BY

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PRESENTED TO
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A REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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EDUCATION 706: HISTORY,
PHILOSOPHY, AND ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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PURPOSES OF PAPER

I. To determine whether community college administrators need special skills in their dealings with the minority constituencies on campus.

II. To identify problems which administrators face in dealing with minorities.

III. To identify practices which community college administrators prove successful.

IV. To present findings from I, II, and III above and make recommendations.

VALUE OF PAPER

The value and implications of this report is to provide educators with information in terms of the need to develop and staff the kinds of training programs necessary to equipt administrators with special skills in Masters and Doctoral Programs in four-year institutions as well as in-service-training programs in the community colleges.

The value of this investigative paper for the student author is the endeavor to gain deeper insights in terms of developing skills necessary to become an effective community college administrator.

RESEARCH OF THE LITERATURE

There was a minimal amount of literature available dealing with this specific topic, therefore the research literature was discussed under the three different sections rather than condensing it into one section.

Each of the three sections deals with a particular topic. The relevant research literature for that topic is examined under that particular topic heading rather than under a broad heading of literature review customarily utilized to present research findings.

Introduction

The following study will explore the special administrative skills needed by community college administrators in dealing with minority students on campus. For the purposes of this investigation, the term "minority students" will designate the following five ethnic groups: Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. In comparison to the majority of middle-class students, members of these five ethnic backgrounds have been traditionally deprived of an equal oppurtunity to maximize their potential ability. Their frequent experience with family poverty, neighborhood blight, and inadequate schools have not generally provided them with the same positive attitudes as the majority of students on the community college campus. Moreover, these minority students have grown up amidst bigotry and social prejudice directed against them, and they realize that they are likely to be discriminated against in future employment and housing regardless of their educational attainment.

However, many young adults from these five ethnic backgrounds now view higher education as a means of significantly improving their social status, gaining a solid sense of self-esteem, and fulfilling their ambitions despite the prospect of continuing bigotry in the society at large. Consequently, the community colleges are receiving an ever-increasing proportion of minority students. The community college costs less to attend, has lower standards

of admission, and enables students to live at home. These features of the community college make it more attractive to minority students than a four-year institution would be. In the future, the community college system will provide their passport to specialized technical careers and to four-year institutions.

Accordingly, the community college administrator, who often comes from a middle-class background, must develop special administrative skills geared to the needs of the growing proportion of minority constituencies on campus. It is hoped that the following discussion will provide educators with information and insight that will enable them to develop and staff training programs to equipt future administrators with these special skills.

This study will be presented in four sections:

1) The identification of personality traits and communication skills which community college administrators should possess for effectively relating to minority students.
2) Analysis of problems which administrators commonly face in dealing with minority students.
3) Practices and programs which administrators have innovated to benefit minority students.
4) Summary of findings and recommendations for the future.

The information presented in this study will be derived from a review of the research literature as well as from personal interviews with administrators, student group leaders, and affirmative-action coordinators at the following campuses of the Los Angeles Community College District: L.A. Pierce College, L.A. Mission College, L.A. Valley College, West Los Angeles City College, South-West College, L.A. Trade Technical College, East Los Angeles College, Los Angeles City College, and Los Angeles Harbor College.

The Identification of Personality Traits and Communication Skills which Community College Administrators Need in Dealing with Minority Constituencies on Campus

Although an administrator is aware of the problems he will encounter in dealing with minority students and although he is aware of practices and innovative programs to assist them, he will nevertheless be ineffective as an administrator unless he possesses certain personality traits and communication skills. Interviews with a variety of administrators within the Los Angeles Community College system consistently yielded the conclusion that desirable personality traits and communication skills are of utmost importance. Even if an administrator has minimal awareness of the unique problems and innovative solutions that might arise in his dealings with minority students, his personality traits and communication skills can create a relationship of trust and harmony where conflict can be reconciled toward a mutually-agreeable solution. Without these personality traits and communication skills, however, the administrator is likely to provoke a level of suspicion, distrust, and resentment that would accentuate the severity of any solution he proposes.

Interviews with administrators and a review of the literature indicated the following profile of personality traits and communication skills necessary for dealing with minority students:

1) The administrator must be tough-minded and articulate to win respect for his authority, but he must avoid being

an insensitive bureaucrat.

2) The administrator must have a sense of empathy for the problems of minority students. In his dealings with them, he should relate his own personal struggles which relate to the current predicament of the students.

3) The administrator should project human warmth and never act in an aloof, arrogant manner.

4) He should be able to withstand harsh criticism without being defensive.

5) He should feel secure enough to allow minority students to participate in the decision-making process.

6) He must be a realist in accepting compromise as a likely solution when a diversity of interests are in conflict.

7) He must not be a person who only deals with the needs of the moment; he must have the foresight to predict problems which might erupt into a crisis in the future.

8) He must have a sense of humor to avoid presenting himself as a rigid person.

9) He must be a person who confronts a problem directly instead of avoiding the issue, confusing the problem with jargon, blaming others, dumping the problem on the laps of others, and otherwise "beating around the bush".

10) He must remain cool under fire and walk the tightrope between extreme viewpoints.

11) He must be a patient listener who avoids criticizing a student until the student has finished expressing his viewpoint and who avoids challenging the integrity of a student to cleverly dismiss the argument.

12) He must not be offended when a minority student uses profanity or "street talk" when presenting a grievance or viewpoint. He must understand that profanity is a common vehicle of self-expression in minority communities. If an administrator takes offense when profane words are expressed, it is disruptive to real communication. In most cases, he must recognize that there was no intention to personally insult him or demean his status.

13) He must communicate to minority students that he understands their life style and is familiar with the community-action groups that represent the interests of minorities to end prejudice and discrimination.

The above list of personality traits and communication skills was presented in a random order. It could not be determined from interviews or research literature how these thirteen characteristics ought to be ranked in order of importance. An interesting future study would determine if a random sampling of administrators consistently ranked some of these thirteen characteristics as more important than others in dealing with minority students. A random sampling of student leaders among the minority constituencies could determine if minority students rank the thirteen characteristics in a different order or importance in comparison to administrators. The results might be very beneficial for the administrator's insight into why his negotiations with minority students are not as effective as he would like. For example, such a survey

might determine that administrators place a "sense of humor" among the most important of the 13 characteristics, whereas minority students rate a "sense of humor" at the bottom of the list. Thus, while the administrator is stressing humor to avoid an appearance of rigidity, minority students might perceive the administrator's reliance upon humor as a lack of seriousness in considering student grievances as important matters. Such a research study could develop a standard survey questionnaire and statistical-evaluation procedure by which administrators could determine which of the 13 personality traits and communication skills should be emphasized most when dealing with minority constituencies.

The thirteen characteristics listed previously are especially necessary when dealing with minority students, although these personality traits and communication skills would be a valuable asset in dealing with all students. It must be emphasized, however, that the majority of students have been trained to deal with grievances by "going through the proper channels", by patiently dealing with bureaucratic red tape, and by diplomatic negotiations with administrators. Minority students, on the other hand, are less accustomed to postpone immediate gratification for future rewards. In comparison to their middle-class peers, minority students "tend to respond to frustration with aggression instead of discussion."[1] Minority students with frustrated expectations are more likely to directly confront an administrator with an outburst of anger and to expect an immediate correction for

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1. William Moore, Jr., Blind Man on a Freeway: The Community College Administrator (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1971) p. 53.

their grievance. Accordingly, the administrator needs special personality traits and communication skills which would not necessarily be required when dealing with the majority of students. Minority students demand quick solutions and are likely to provoke volatile confrontations with any administrator they perceive as a "master of evasion":

> "Minority students have other specific gripes against the administration. They insist that administrators are masters of evasion because they rarely, if ever, give a student a direct answer to a question. And the answers that they do provide are suspect. This suspicion is not without some basis,"[2]

Since the thirteen personality traits and communication skills are a prerequisite to coping with the problems of minority constituencies, how can an administrator correct his personal deficiencies in these 13 areas in order to provide more effective leadership? The initiation of sensitivity-training workshops for administrators has been suggested as one technique to bring about an awareness of such deficiencies. According to William Moore, Jr.:

> "An administrator can begin to fight bigotry on the campus by admitting that it is there. It is. To eliminate it, it is best to start with his own team before he attempts to work with the faculty and other staff. There are no specific answers and no cure-alls to the problem. Yet, some methods used previously can be of value. A confrontation workshop with all the members of the administrative staff invited is one configuration which may be used."[3]

Leaders of ethnic organizations on campus would be invited to confront administrators with their problems in a group session. Administrators and students would verbally confront each other to air long-standing prejudices, fears, and to give their personal opinions and feelings

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2. Moore, op.cit., p. 58.
3. Ibid., p.119.

regarding each other. In this way, administrators would learn their strengths and weaknesses regarding the 13 personality traits and communication skills. By utilizing the new technology of videotape recording, the administrators can later review the confrontation session and discuss among themselves how they can improve their style. Videotaping the confrontation session actually permits an administrator to later watch how he interacts with the minority students and to notice poor communication patterns which he had been unaware of previously.

Another variation of sensitivity training would involve regular sessions without the presence of the minority students. A trained facilitator would preside over each session to stimulate the administrators to express their true feelings regarding each other. The facilitator might begin such a session by asking each participant to briefly state his strengths and weaknesses as a person. Each administrator would later receive feedback from other group members. In this way, an administrator might learn from others, for example, that his colleagues perceive him as a more aggressive person than he thinks he is. By the process of feedback, each group member can attain greater awareness of how others view him. This awareness, in and of itself, can often initiate the process of beneficial personality transformation. During later sessions, some of the administrators can "role-play" minority students attempting to negotiate a policy decision. By taking the role of a minority student, the administrator can acquire greater sensitivity in learning how an administrator is viewed by a minority student.

Although community college administrators have been slow to develop confrontation workshops and sensitivity training, many large business and industrial organizations have been effectively using these techniques for many years.[4] A mixed group of management personnel and "opinion leaders" from informal groups of rank-and-file employees may meet to express antagonisms. To reach a mutual understanding of their respective interests, managers role-play "opinion leaders" and visa versa in a hypothetical policy-making session. In this way, management personnel learn to appreciate the human feelings and needs of labor, while the "opinion leaders" from labor become more aware of management's point of view. Management personnel learn how their personality traits and poor communication skills may lead rank-and-file labor to instigate malicious gossip, to restrict productivity, to encourage foul-ups, and to promote absenteeism. It is time that community college administrators followed the example of business and industrial managers in learning how to improve their personality traits and communication skills for more effective leadership. As a result, community college administrators will find their dealings with minority students to be more harmonious and productive.

Analysis of Problems which Administrators Commonly Face in Dealing with Minority Students

An effective community-college administrator must also have the skill to know the types of unique problems which

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4. Chris Argyris, Interpersonal Competence and Organizational Effectiveness (Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press, 1962) pp. 144-145

might arise in his dealings with minority students. One of the most significant problem areas is the administrator's relationship to the various ethnic studies programs on campus. He must recognize the potential value that these ethnic studies have for minority students, but he must also insure that such courses meet the academic standards expected of other courses at the community college. Courses in ethnic studies can enable a student to find a sense of relevance, identity, and pride in his heritage; however, if these programs are poorly administered, they might sink to the level of mere "rap sessions" which contribute little to the academic progress of minority students.

Gleazer has noted that the administrator should be aware of the benefits of ethnic studies before condemning such programs as an unnecessary part of the curriculum:

> "Fear of writing is reduced when the student is encouraged to write about those things he wants to write about, and matters of race and culture, especially his own race and culture, are very much on his mind."[5]

In this way, Gleazer has pointed out how a minority student might improve his writing skills when registered for a course requiring him to express his thoughts regarding relevant aspects of his own ethnic heritage: literature, history, art, and music.

On the other hand, the administrator must also recognize that ethnic studies programs can degenerate into a "sham" if he does not take the responsibility to supervise and evaluate these elements of the curriculum. During recent years, there

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5. Edmund J. Gleazer, Jr., Project Focus: A Forecast Study of Community Colleges (New York: McGraw Hill, 1973) p.32.

has been much harsh criticism of the ethnic studies programs initiated during the 1960's. According to Sutton:

> "Many of these courses and programs are a sham, and I fault Balck and non-Black staff for the present problems of many of these programs. Under-staffed, under-financed, and lacking college-wide recognition and support, these courses and programs have been allowed to proliferate without the demands for standards of academic excellence that are required of other courses and programs...I endorse Black studies offerings as one avenue for educational opportunity, but I oppose the maintenance of offerings that were hastily put together to appease angry students four, five, or six years ago without administrative commitment to adequate funding and staffing, and without provision for ongoing planning, evaluation, and revision."[6]

If the contributions of all ethnic groups could be routinely included in the regular courses for history, literature, art, and music, the variety of ethnic studies programs might not be necessary. However, such a curriculum reform does not seem likely in the near future. Instead, administrators should devote their attention to improving the quality of current ethnic studies programs. This can be a delicate problem area: administrators who try to supervise and improve these programs are likely to be accused of arrogant meddling by minority students. Minority students may strongly assert their right to "self-determination" in deciding the style and content of ethnic studies courses.

Another problem area involves the appearance of controversial speakers on compus. Such speakers might present theories and research findings that stir intense animosity in minority students. For example, a scientist who believes that Blacks are genetically inforior in intellectual ability might be invited to present a special lecture by a faculty member.

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6. Connis Sutton, "Staff Development: A New Promise to the New Student" in Roger Yarrington (ed.), New Staff for New Students (Washington, D.C.; American Assoc, of Community and Junior Colleges, 1974) pp. 91-92.

The Black students on campus appeal to the administrator to prevent this offensive speaker from appearing on their campus. The administrator most consequently protect the freedom of speech and assambly for both the speaker and the minority students. He must "walk a tightrope" in allowing the speaker to appear and in permitting minority students to demonstrate against the guest speaker. If an administrator can anticipate this kind of problem, he can respond effectively instead of reacting to his own shock and indecision.

A third problem area is that the administrator does not have sufficient knowledge of the life-styles of the various ethnic groups on campus. In some cases, mininformed administrators may write letters to the campus newspaper in which they refer to Blacks as Negroes, to Native-Americans as Indians, and to Chicanos as Mexican-Americans. It is good public relations to use an ethnic label most appropriate to reinforce the minority group's own sense of pride and identity. Currently, the labels of Negro, Indian, and Mexican-American are not appreciated by members of these three ethnic groups. In more extreme cases, administrators actually maintain bigoted, stereotyped attitudes regarding these minority groups. If minority groups detect that their heritage is not appreciated by an administrator, negotiations are likely to be surrounded by tension and distrust. The administrator who is familiar with the unique language patterns, musical tastes, diet, modes of entertainment, family structure, sex-role differentiation, and other traditions of the five minority groups is more likely to win the respect

of minority students.[7] In this regard, William Moore, Jr. has commented that the effective administrator should be fully aware of the different lifestyles among ethnic groups:

> "He should take special note of the holidays and days of other special observance, know the birth dates of special heroes, be aware of the impact these days or events might have on his institution, and read the small community ethnic newspapers."[8]

Administrators of financial aid to students must learn to be more sensitive to the impoverished background of many minority students. Baker has noted the frequent assertion by minority students that financial aid officials have minimal interest in disadvantaged students.[9] These administrators must become more sensitive to the following situation: Minority students often feel guilty that they are not contributing financially to their own household after age 18. Caught between these guilt feelings and inadequate financial aid, these students are likely to "drop out" or to work full-time at jobs which leave them too exhausted to concentrate upon their academic work.

The administrator will also face the complaint that members of minority groups are not visible among the administrative staff. This situation leads minority students to question the credibility of their own future employment:

> "Black and brown students look for members of their races to identify with in the professions or in positions of responsibility in the community. But they find few of these in board membership, in the top-level administrative ranks, or in the professional life of the community."[10]

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7. A good summary of differences in ethnic lifestyles is presented in Stephen Kreimer, Ethnic Differences Influencing the Delivery of Rehabilitation Services (Washington, D.C.: National Rehabilitation Association, 1972).
8. Moore, op.cit., p. 150.
9. Walter Baker, "The Financial Aid Officer and Minority Students" in R.A. Altman and P.O. Snyder (eds.), The Minority Students on Campus: Expectations and Possibilities (Boulder, Colorado: Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, 1971) p.149.

If more administrators from minority groups were hired, the minority students would have visible role models on campus to provide them with more optimism that educational attainment will reward them in the future.

Furthermore, administrators from minority backgrounds might convey to minority students that a person from their own heritage has been given the authority to help them in forceful ways. Moore, however, has noted that the non-white administrator is often placed in a bind to serve the community college interest at the same time as he is trying to serve students from minority constituencies. His problem is to remain impartial and to avoid favoritism:

> "The nonwhite administrator must be honest even when it means that his decisions or actions may hurt someone in his community...If he cannot fulfill a request, he should say so and not make people return to his office or make numerous telephone calls for information, assistance, and positions which he does not have the authority or resources to provide." 11

Finally, the administrator will face the grievance by minority students that the community college has not exerted enough effort to help them feel oriented to college life, to assist them in compensating for inferior academic preparation in secondary school, and to provide counseling programs. The administrator must realize that the "open-door" policy will be a failure unless he has the skill to emplement a variety of orientation, tutoring, and counseling programs to assist minority students.

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10. Gleazer, op. cit., p. 23.
11. Moore, op. cit., p. 131.

Practices and Programs which Administrators Have Innovated to Benefit Minority Students

In order to help minority students in making a successful adjustment, the effective administrator should have the skill to implement special orientation, tutoring, and counseling programs.

Many community colleges have established pre-college orientation programs. A special team of counselors regularly visits the high schools with a high proportion of minority students. In meeting with these students, the counselors are able to recruit many who would have otherwise felt uninspired to attend a community college. They help the minority student to overcome his resistance to the formality of college admission and registration procedures. The students are also assisted in filling out financial aid applications and are guided on a comprehensive tour of campus facilities. Without this special outreach and orientation program, many minority students would be discouraged from seeking admission by the formality of paperwork and impersonal relationships with administrative clerks that routinely accompany the admissions process.

Tutorial programs have also assisted minority students in attaining their educational goals. Within the L.A. Community College District, the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOP&S) has provided free tutoring services with funding from the State of California. Tutors are recruited from well-qualified students who are eligible for Work-Study Grants. The tutors meets on a one-to-one basis with students

encountering difficulties with basic learning skills as well as with specialized adacemic coursework. Workshops are also established to help students reduce the anxiety they encounter during testing situations. In addition, many of the nine campuses have implemented a Learning Resource Center to provide self-instructional materials and audio-visual aids.

Counseling programs are a third area of assistance to minority students. According to Clanke:

> "Knowledge of new careers should be an essential part of career counseling for minority group students. They need to know what career opportunities are available; they need to identify their own areas of interest; they need to know what is involved in career choices; they need to know how to attain a goal attainment strategy; and, they need to know what alternatives they have."[12]

Aside from career counseling, student personnel workers should also help minority students cope with personal problems and develop a sense of self-confidence. Clarke, however, notes that the hiring of professional counselors from minority groups is no guarantee that minority students will relate well to such counselors:

> "To hire a counselor from a particular minority group in order to provide an identity figure for students is no assurance that the purpose will be achieved...In many cases, the counselor from the minority group is rejected by the group...What is important is the ability of the counselor and the nature of the counseling situation. Good counselors can provide beneficial services for all students."[13]

Within the L.A. Community College District, peer-counseling services have been established under EOP&S supervision.[14]

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12. Johnnie R. Clarke, "Student Personnel Work and Minority Groups" in Terry O'Banion and Alice Thurston (eds.), Student Deveolpment Programs in the Community Junior College (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972) p.45
13. Ibid., p. 44.
14. Los Angeles Mission College, Peer Counseling Handbook (Los Angeles: EOP&S Mission College, 1978)

Students are trained to conduct group rap sessions, individual rap sessions, and career guidance groups. Peer counselors also provide new students with orientation to campus services, registration assistance, and referrals to community agencies.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations for the Future

1. Confrontation workshops and sensitivity training should be implemented to stimulate administrators to develop the personality traits and communication skills necessary for effectively dealing with minority students.
2. Survey research is necessary to determine more precisely if administrators and minority students have the same perception of personality traits and communication skills which an administrator should possess for dealing with minority constituencies on campus.
3. Administrators need a greater awareness of the type of problems that they are likely to encounter in dealing with minority students. These problem areas include supervising ethnic studies programs, dealing with controversial guest speakers, gaining knowledge regarding various ethnic lifestyles, hiring administrators from minority backgrounds, and instituting programs to make the "open door" policy successful.
4. Administrators need the skill to know what kinds of orientation, tutoring, and counseling programs they can establish to benefit minority students.
5. It is recommended that these special administrative skills for dealing with minority constituencies can be fostered in several ways:

Students who are enrolled in Masters and Ph.D. programs to complete their training for administrative positions at the community college level should be provided with paid internships at community colleges. They will gain firsthand experience in day-to-day dealings with minority constituencies.[15] Furthermore, as part of their formal academic training, future community college administrators should routinely receive coursework in the nature of confrontation workshops and sensitivity training, the problems they are likely to encounter in dealing with minority students, knowledge of the unique lifestyles of various ethnic minorities, and a seminar devoted to analyzing the kind of programs which can be instituted to benefit minority students.

For present administrators, the above training can be accomplished by intensive inservice education. According to O'Banion, community college administrators have neglected to fully utilize inservice education to improve their skills:

> "Inservice education should be strongly supproted because it provides the best opportunity for community colleges to renew and enhance their programs...Unless staff members are constantly updated and supproted in their own development, programs cannot grow and flourish to meet the needs of students."[16]

In closing his critical evaluation of the American system of community colleges, William Moore remarked:

> "In the final analysis, there are no pat solutions to the problems of administration in the community college. Most of us do not even know what questions to ask."[17]

It is hoped that the previous discussion has addressed itself to exploring a significant question with a spirit of optimism.

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15. Moore, op.cit., p.107.
16. Terry O'Banion, Staff Development: A Priority on Persons" in Yarrington, op.cit., pp.23-24.
17. Moore, op.cit., p. 150.

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